

CLAIMS

- 5 1. A pre-treating composition for shoes comprising a polymeric soil release agent and a spreading agent.
2. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 1 wherein said polymeric soil release agent is a polysaccharide.
- 10 3. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 2 wherein the polysaccharide is carboxymethylcellulose.
4. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 2 wherein the molecular weight of the polysaccharide is less than about 1,000,000.
- 15 5. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 4 wherein the molecular weight of the polysaccharide is less than about 500,000.
6. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 5 wherein the molecular weight of the polysaccharide is less than about 250,000.
- 20 7. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 1 wherein the spreading agent is a nonionic surfactant.
8. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 2 wherein the spreading agent is a nonionic surfactant.
9. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 1 further comprising an antimicrobial agent.
- 30 10. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 1 further comprising a drying agent.
11. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 10 wherein the drying agent comprises ethanol.

12. A pre-treating composition according to Claim 9 wherein said antimicrobial agent is water insoluble, and said water insoluble antimicrobial is made soluble by the addition of the ethanol to an aqueous system.
- 5 13. A method of treating shoes comprising the steps of:
  - (a) providing one or more shoes, said shoes having surfaces; and
  - (b) depositing the pre-treating composition of Claim 1 on at least a portion of the surfaces of said one or more shoes.
- 10 14. The method of Claim 13 wherein the pre-treating composition is applied via a spray.
- 15 15. The method of Claim 13 wherein the pre-treating composition is applied by painting or rolling the same onto the shoes.
- 16 16. The method of Claim 13 wherein the pre-treating composition is applied via the rinse cycle in a washing machine.
- 17 17. A method of treating one or more shoes, said method comprising the steps of:
  - (a) providing one or more shoes, said shoes having surfaces;
  - (b) depositing a first protective substance on at least a portion of the surfaces of said one or more shoes after which said shoes can be worn; and
  - (c) applying a removing substance to said at least a portion of the surfaces of said shoes after said shoes have been worn to at least partially remove said first protective substance and any soil or dirt deposited thereon.
- 20 18. The method of Claim 17 wherein the step (c) of applying a removing substance occurs during a step of washing said one or more shoes.
- 25 19. The method of Claim 17 wherein said first protective substance applied in step (b) comprises a polymeric soil release agent, and the removing substance applied in step (c) comprises one or more enzymes.
- 30 20. The method of Claim 19 wherein said polymeric soil release agent is a polysaccharide.

21. The method of Claim 20 wherein said polysaccharide is carboxymethylcellulose.
22. The method of Claim 21 wherein said one or more enzymes comprises cellulase.
- 5 23. The method of Claim 19 wherein said one or more enzymes are provided in a detergent or conditioner.
- 10 24. The method of Claim 17 wherein said first protective substance applied in step (b) comprises one or more carbohydrate biopolymers, and the removing substance applied in step (c) comprises one or more carbohydrases.
- 15 25. The method of Claim 17 wherein said first protective substance applied in step (b) comprises one or more polypeptide biopolymers, and the removing substance applied in step (c) comprises one or more proteases.
- 20 26. The method of Claim 17 wherein said first protective substance applied in step (b) comprises one or more polyesters, and the removing substance applied in step (c) comprises one or more lipases, esterases, and/or polyesterases.